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26 May 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Deputy Director (Plans)

SUBJECT : Conversation with NASA Officials re
Resumption of CHALICE Weather
Flights - 26 May 1960

1. I met this morning with Dr. Hugh L. Dryden, Deputy Director, NASA; Dr. Richard V. Rhode; and Mr. Walter Bonney, Director, Press Relations, NASA, for the purpose of informing them of Secretary Herter's political clearance granted last evening for the resumption of local U-2 weather flights at the various CHALICE bases. At that time I advised them that the Department of State was withholding answer to a question posed to them yesterday by AVIATION WEEK regarding whether or not the weather flights had been resumed. I explained that if they concurred with Mr. Herter's view, we would advise the Department of State to respond affirmatively to the AVIATION WEEK inquiry.

2. Dr. Dryden, as spokesman for the trio, made the following points:

a. The informal NASA position at this moment, reflecting the views of Dr. Glennen, Dr. Dryden and Mr. Richard Horner, is that NASA should seek to disengage itself from any scientific sponsorship of further U-2 flights.

b. It had been planned that Mr. Horner would discuss this matter in detail with Mr. Bissell at luncheon on Thursday, 2 June. The fact that the NASA opinion has come out in the open prior to this luncheon is a reflection of the fact that my visit was prompted by Secretary Herter's 25 May opinion.

c. Dr. Dryden indicated that in view of Dr. Glennen's general disenchantment with CHALICE, he was not at all certain that this matter might not be brought up at this afternoon's Cabinet meeting, at which point Dr. Glennen might ask the President to release him from any further involvement with Project CHALICE.

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d. Dr. Dryden and Mr. Bonney indicated that Dr. Glennen was smarting from the manner in which NASA, in general, and he, in particular, was excluded from the high level conference on 7 May, which resulted in a political decision that NASA would take the fall as the unwitting accomplice of an intelligence operation. It was stated that since that time Dr. Glennen has received no conciliatory statements from either the Secretary of State or the DCI and, accordingly, is anything but sympathetic to continued involvement in the program.

3. Mr. Bonney also called my attention to the fact that NASA was quite unhappy about the misunderstanding of 13 May in which a premature announcement was made, reportedly on advice of the Agency, that weather flights had been resumed. Criticism of NASA ensued and an oral retraction was made on 17 May. Since the incident Mr. Bonney stated that NASA's position was that the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation was studying the whole question of air worthiness of the U-2 aircraft, and that even though the State Department was willing to accede politically to a request for resumption, until NASA's role was cleared up it was his view that the story of continued grounding pending Lockheed's study should remain in force. With this opinion Dr. Rhode and Dr. Dryden concurred.

4. Accordingly, I will advise the Department of State in the person of Mr. Richard Harding Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, that the Department should respond to the pending AVIATION WEEK query that the aircraft remain grounded until the completion of Lockheed's study. Instructions reflecting this decision will be prepared for the field.

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Chief, Administrative Branch
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